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ART. XVII.—*The Ante-Brahmanical Religion of the Hindus.*
By the REV. DR. STEVENSON.

[Read March 15, 1845.]

IT is a matter of no small difficulty to give a general view of the Religion of India, and so to arrange the different Deities composing the Hindu Pantheon, as to place before the student of Hindu Mythology a connected and harmonious system of the religious belief of the natives of Hindustan. Brahmá for example is styled the Creator of the Universe, and yet almost totally disregarded, not even a single temple being erected to his honour, although creation is one of the chief grounds of religious worship. Vishnu in the system stands forth as the Preserver, but in the eye of his votaries consisting of myriads in every part of the country, the world owes its origin, as well as its preservation to him; and Siva, though systematic writers tell us he is to be regarded as the author of Destruction, and the third God of the Hindu Triad, is worshipped by millions as the Supreme God, the Preserver as well as the Destroyer, the Imparter equally with the Taker away of life. Again, no small proportion of the Hindu nation ascribe the origin of the system of the Universe to a female divinity, whom they consider the Mother of all the Gods, and to whom also they attribute a principal share in its government. In regard to the rites and ceremonies by which the objects of their veneration should be served, there is an equal diversity of sentiment among the Hindus. Some think it wrong to offer to a deity any thing that has ever been possessed of life, while, on the other hand, others hold by the maxim that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, or reconciliation with God. To endeavour then, as some both among Hindus and Europeans have attempted, to combine all these contradictory positions into one harmonious system, can never gain the approbation of the rational inquirer. The present Hindu religion must be considered not as one system, but as a congeries of parts derived from several systems, and we may as soon look for order and consistency in it, as in the iceberg where trees carried down by the mountain torrents, polar bears which had gone out to sea in search of their prey, and the amphibious seal, had all been hemmed in by the irresistible power of congelation, and united with the frozen liquid in the formation of one heterogeneous mass.

It is necessary, therefore, that we should remember that there are

three different systems of religious belief which have contributed to the formation of modern Hinduism. The System of the ancient Brahmans, the Buddhistical System, and the rude idolatrous worship which, previous to the extensive propagation of either of the above Systems, prevailed among the Aboriginal inhabitants of India, in order that we may have a true and exact notion of what is now called the Hindu religion. From the Brahmanical system, as developed in the *Saṁhitās* and *Brahmanas* of the Vedas, we have among the Brahmans, the daily and periodical readings of the Vedas, the preservation of the sacred fire, and its accompanying worship, and the adoration of Vishnu as a deity of great power and influence. From the Buddhistical system is derived the tenderness of animal life, a thing foreign to the Vedas, in which hymns are appointed to be sung even at the sacrifice of the Sacred Cow. Hinduism owes, if not the invention of the principles of its metaphysics, at least much assistance in their development and culture, to Buddhism. The great principles in all the ancient systems are the same;—the importance ascribed to *Swabhāva* or Nature, the Metempsychosis, and Final Absorption,—these are common to Buddhism and Brahmanism, notwithstanding their respective peculiarities; and the disputes of the respective adherents of the two systems have tended to bring them further into greater prominence. The worship of Jagannatha in Orissa, and of Vithoba at Pundherpur, where the distinction of caste is laid aside for the time, are both derived, as I have elsewhere shown, from a Buddhistical source. But the modern system of Hinduism seems after all to have been mainly addobted to local superstitions, prevalent among the aboriginal tribes, which I have called the Ante-Brahmanical religion of the Hindus in former papers.

Under this head I think we must class the worship of Siva, especially under the form of the Linga, which now so extensively prevails among the Hindus. Siva is usually styled *Īśvara* or Supreme God, *Mahādeva* or Great God, or distinguished by some other name indicating pre-eminence. As Siva has in modern times been patronized by a great proportion of the Brahmans, and been celebrated in a majority of the *Purānas*, it may seem rather hardly to assert that he has no place in the original Brahmanical Theogony, and is no better than an upstart, introduced into the system from the rude and unconnected superstitions of the Barbarians, among whom the Brahmans introduced civilization and literature. The following considerations however will, I think, convince every impartial person, capable of forming an opinion on the subject, that this is really the case.

The notion of a triad of Gods, of which in the modern system

Śiva forms one essential element, is altogether unauthorized by the ancient Hymns of the Rig and Sáma Vedas, the only undoubted composition of the ancient Rishis, and unimpeachable authorities in regard to the opinions of the ancient Brahmans. I do not insist upon Brahmá, Vishnu, and Śiva never there being found united by name as emanating from the primeval Divinity, but on the fact that no three gods are there represented as flowing immediately from Deity. Such a triad, indeed, forms a part of the Egyptian Theogony, where Osiris, Isis, and Horus, or perhaps more correctly Amoun-ra, Amoun-neu, and Sevek-ra form a triad of gods. The Buddhists, too, have a triad, the Chinese also have one, and even the Greeks and Romans had their Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, sons of Saturn, among whom the government of the world was divided. But on looking into the Vedas we find Agni, Váyu, Indra, Mitra, and Soma, the deified Fire, Wind, Firmament, Sun, and Moon, all frequently highly extolled, but never arranged in a Triad System. The only thing of the kind that appears in the Vedas, and which may not improbably be a remnant of a doctrine, which seems to have existed in very ancient times, and with more or less corruption to have been embodied in the religions of the most ancient nations of the world, is the three sacrificial fires, which are necessary for the performance of the most sacred Brahmanical rites. In the Somayága and Jyotishtoma for example, three fires, Dakshinagni, Ahavaníya, Gárhapatya, one at each end, and one in the centre, joined by a serpentine line, are lighted up for the performance of the sacrifice. It is the same god Agni, however, under different aspects that is supposed to reside in them all; in one, as the vivifying heat that supports the world, and which resides chiefly in the southern regions; in another, as the sacred flame that licks up the sacrifice, and forwards it to the gods; and, in the third, as that guardian fire which ever burns in the house, and cherishes the family of the sacrificer. This was the Trinity of the ancient Brahmans, and not a triad of gods derived from one Great Spirit, exercising various functions in the production and administration of the affairs of the universe,—the form that it has been made to assume in the modern system. The presumption then that lies in favour of the existence of Śiva in the ancient system of the Brahmans, as one of that triad, of which one is the Creator, another the Preserver, a third the Destroyer, is entirely obviated, as this forms no part of the ancient Brahmanical system.

Farther, Śiva is not named at all in the ancient Hymns of the Veda, and therefore we have no evidence that such a deity was worshipped by the ancient Brahmans, but on the contrary, since all the

gods are invited to partake of their sacrifice, and all of any notoriety separately and frequently called on by name, it could never have happened that so great a god as Mahádeva could have been overlooked, if he had been known to the Brahmans. I know that it will at once be objected to this statement, that Siva is the Rudra of the Vedas, and therefore frequently invoked under that name. The first time that the word Rudra occurs in the Vedas, is in the 10th Rich of the IV. Sukta of the VI. Anuvaka of the First Book of the Rik. The third and fourth Suktas are an address made by Súnah Sépa to Agni.

In every one of the twenty-three verses of which they consist, Agni is directly addressed except in the 4th Rich of the IIIrd Sukta, where Varúna, Mitra, and Aryama, three of the Ádityas, are invoked. In the Rich preceding the 10th, and in the one that follows Agni is specifically invoked, and the Commentator Sáiyana Achárya, without any hesitation applies the 10th also to the same divinity, paraphrasing बोध by बोध्यमानाग्ने and translating रुद्राय by कृण्व, making it an epithet of Agni. The same verso is again introduced into the second Daśata of the 1st Part of the Sáma Veda at the 5th Rich, in a collection of verses in praise of Agni; showing that Vyása, or whoever arranged these verses, here considered the two as identical. And in the IXth Prapathaka, Rich 3, of the IIrd Part, Agni is again identified with Rudra in a way that cannot be mistaken. After quoting the same verse, there is immediately added, "May he, the Mighty One who cannot be measured, *known by his smoky ensign*, the all-joyous divinity, satisfy our desires in respect to solemn rites, and supplies of food." Yet, although Rudra in those instances must be held as identified with Agni, Agni cannot be identified with the Siva of the Puranas. Siva is better known by no characteristic than by his having five heads, and hence called Panchánana, as Brahmá is by his having four; and Agni is as distinctly characterised by his having seven heads, and hence has acquired the name of Sapta Sirsha. Here are besides several passages in the Vedas where Rudra cannot well be identified with Agni, and the Rudras are generally regarded as a subordinate class of divinities; thus for example, Agni is on one occasion called on "to bring Indra with the Vasus, Brahat with the Ádityas, and Rudra with the Rudras" to the sacrifice, which could not be said, if Rudra and Agni were the same deity. (Rik. Ashtaka V. Varga 13.) Indeed, we are forced to acknowledge that most of the Rishis followed a different legend from that adopted by Súnah Sépa in the above mentioned

passage,—a legend adopted by the Vishnu and Matsya Purāṇas, which make the production of Rudra or Vāmadeva, the lord of the band, to spring from Brahmā, after his mental sons. None of the Rishis seem even to have dreamt of elevating Rudra to the highest place in the system, either as the underived essence, or as one of a triad, the cause of destruction and regeneration. The above-quoted Rish will equally prove that Rudra cannot be one of the Ādityas.

The place that Siva now occupies in the Saiva System, and Vishnu in the Vaishnava, was held in ancient times by Soma. In the Vedas, Soma the deified Moon, identified with the spirit drawn from the Moon-plant, is the principal deity. It is said that “he holds the first place among the gods” (Śāma Part II., Adhyāya III., Varga 1); “that he is the Creator of all things that have been, or shall be, who raised the Sun to his station in the heaven” (Part II., Adhya. XII., V. 19); “that he made the four luminous worlds and their appendages” (Part I., Daś. 7, V. 7); “that he is the father of intelligence, the father of heaven, the father of fire, the father of the sun, and the father even of Vishnu” (Part I., Daś. 4, V. 5); and he is said moreover to be “the Mighty Essence, which remained when the womb of Ocean covered up all the gods, who [placed in Indra all the might that deity possesses, and produced the solar radiance” (Part I., Daś. 1, V. 10). On the other hand, the Rudras in the Veda are joined with the Ribhus, deified Brahmans, in singing the praises of Indra (Part II., Adhyāya 16, V. 1). For Indra is a divinity notwithstanding the contempt into which he has now fallen, sustaining in the Veda the character Vishnu holds in the modern system of the Vaishnavas, being called “the Sun of the world and Lord of all things animate and inanimate” (Part I., Daś. 5, V. 1); “who, when all the gods fled before Vritrásur, alone, with his dependants the Maruts, subdued the hosts of the enemy” (Part I., Daś. 4, V. 2). How very different the rank attributed to Rudra is, and how clearly he is identified with Siva in the Linga Purāṇa, the composition of one of his sectaries, appears from every page.

The following lines from the exordium may be quoted as illustrative of this position, and of the nature of the modern Hindu Triad:—
 “The ungenerated is Siva, and the Linga is denominated Saiva (belonging to Siva); when we speak of Pradhāna and Prakṛiti (Chaos and Nature), we are also to understand the Supreme Linga, which is free of smell, colour, and taste; which can neither utter a sound, nor be made the subject of touch; having no sensible qualities, but stable, undecaying, ungenerated. The qualities of the manifested Siva, the most excellent Linga, are, on the other hand, smell, colour, taste, a capability

of uttering sound and of being touched. He is the womb of the world, the principal element, sometimes vast, sometimes minute. The Linga itself, for the purpose of developing the world, was produced from the ungenerated; and from social affection the one Linga expanded itself into seven, into eight, and into eleven. From these came the blessed Triad, the first principle of the gods, springing from one, subsisting in three; the whole guarded by one, and the whole unity also carried forward and manifested by one, namely, by Siva."
 "Rudra the Supreme Spirit, the Revered, the Creator (Brahmá), the eternal, the all-wise, and he who is from his nature free from all fault, is called Siva in the Puránas."

It may here be important to refer to the Legend of Daksha, as given in the eighth chapter of the Vishnu Purána, and the extract appended from the Váyu Purána, in Professor Wilson's translation. From that legend it is evident, that Daksha considered that he had all the Rudras present with him, though he had not invited Siva; and that none of the ancient Munis, except Dadhícha, looked on Siva as possessing any right to a share in the sacrifice; that Siva himself confessed to his wife, that "it was a contrivance of the gods that in all sacrifices no portion should be assigned to him;" and that, moreover, his sacred rites were not performed after the Brahmanical method. "My priests," says he, "worship me in the sacrifice of true wisdom, where no *officiating Brahman is needed*;" and, lastly, that at the conclusion, when Daksha submitted to Siva, he received the desired fruit of his works, not from Brahmanical ceremonies, but from adopting the Yoga of Siva. We could hardly, I think, expect plainer language from a Hindu author, in describing a complete change of religion, and the substitution of the new rites of Siva for the ancient Brahmanical worship.

If it be impossible to identify Siva with any of the gods of the Veda, much less is it possible to trace any connection between the symbol of the Linga, under which he is usually adored, and any of the ancient Brahmanical emblems. It is manifest from every page of the Sáma and Rig Vedus, that Agni was adored under the element of fire, that Mitra had no emblem but the sun which shines in the firmament, and that Váyu's presence was only known by hearing his voice resound through the sacrificial hall. The genius of the pestle and mortar are indeed addressed as well as the genius of the waters; but no image in any human or bestial form appears ever to have been made, except when the genius of the oblation was addressed,—the barley meal of which it was composed being formed into the shape of

something like a human head. (Sáma, Part II., Adh. 16 and 17.) But with this doubtful exception, no image was introduced into the Jyotishtoma, Somayága, or other sacred Brahmanical rites authorised by the Vedas. Polytheistical the worship undoubtedly is, but not idolatrous in the proper and distinctive sense of that term. All the worshippers of the Linga, even those Lingáyats who may be said to be monotheists, pay religious homage to the emblem of the god whom they worship. It would be much easier to trace a connection with the worship of the Phallus, which Clemens of Alexandria informs us was set up in every Grecian city to Dionysus or Bacchus, said also to have been considered by some the same god as Osiris, one of the Egyptian Triad, more especially as Arrian the historian seriously relates, that Dionysus made an expedition into India. I speak not of the Priapus of the Romans, the Baal-peor of the Moabites, and some left-handed objects of worship among the Egyptians, for these are not to be identified in any way with Siva. And even in regard to Dionysus, I do not argue that there is anything more than a nearer resemblance than exists between the Linga and any Brahmanical emblem of the Deity.

There is an obscure intimation in the Linga Purána itself, that the worship of the Linga was only introduced at a late period. It is the famous passage from the fifteenth Adhyáya, where the fiery Linga is introduced as settling the dispute between Brahmá and Vishnu for superiority, by taking to itself the honour which they respectively claim. Brahmá and Vishnu seem to have occupied the field between them, till Siva came in to set aside the claims of both. Might we venture to interpret the allegory, and say, that when the ancient Brahmans and Buddhists (for Buddha is considered as an incarnation of Vishnu) were contending for superiority, the votaries of the popular superstition connected with Siva and the Linga, with a few men (probably Brahmans by birth) of learning and influence on their side, wrested the prize from the hands of both, and assumed it to themselves, modifying the ancient faith of the Brahmans, and embodying the popular superstitions, so as to form the Saiva system of Hinduism.

The introduction of Siva, then, into the number of the objects of Brahmanical worship seems evidently an innovation, from the account of Daksha's sacrifice in the Váyu Purána, no sage but Dadhicha having taken the side of Siva; and he seems to have been a kind of heretic, since according to the Linga Purána he was the especial object of Vishnu's displeasure, and only saved from his fury by his devotion

to Mahádeva; and in the Sáma Veda (Part II., Adh. V., R. 8), this Rishi is represented as having had a horse's head, the bones of which Indra employed as weapons against his enemies.

Our conclusion from these authorities in reference to the worship of Siva, is strengthened by the fact, that the sacred places considered as the peculiar residence of Jyoti-Lingas, are generally in the south and north-east of India, at a great distance from the original Brahmanical Settlements to the north of the Ganges and west of the Sarasvati, none being nearer than Mount Abu in Gujarat; and that the south of India is almost the only place where the sect of the Lingáyats abounds; and that in the south and east of India the worshippers of Siva and his incarnations, are far more numerous than those of Vishnu, while in the north-west the contrary is the case.

That the Linga is not originally a Brahmanical object of worship, seems to me very evident by a fact that I have not seen noticed, but which as far as the Maráthi country, where Sáivas greatly prevail, is concerned, I can vouch for from an extensive observation: it is, that no Brahman officiates in a Linga temple. The Brahmins alone officiate as image dressers in the temples of Vishnu, and of all the gods connected with the ancient Brahmanical worship; but for the temples of the Linga, a distinct order of men originally of Sudra origin, have been set apart, and form now a separate caste under the name Guravá गुरवा. The Guravá dresses the image and takes care of the temple; and all that the Brahman or any other worshipper does, is to present before the image his offering of dry rice, plantains, flowers, turmeric, &c., not interfering with the Guravá's dispositions or touching the image. It is quite contrary, however, when a Brahman worshipper comes to Vishnu; he displaces the drooping flowers if he pleases, and places on the image fresh ones with sandal wood paste,—a liberty he may not take with Mahádeva. This difference I consider a proof of the imperfect amalgamation of the worship of the Linga with Brahmanism, since no other reason can easily be assigned for such a marked difference, and such a distance between Siva and his worshippers. The Yogis, devotees of Siva, who may be supposed as adhering more strictly than others to the original ceremonies of his worship, as if in evident contrast to the Brahmins, and mockery of their frequent ablutions, cover themselves with ashes instead of purifying the body by bathing, as every Brahman must do before he can partake of a regular meal. Siva is represented as sitting like a Yogi in the place where the dead are burnt, the most impure of impure places to a

Brahman ; just like the devil Maha Sohon of the Ceyloneso Demonology. (Callaway's *Yakkam Nattannawa*, verse 58—63.) Like him, too, Siva rides on a bullock, a mode of conveyance still deemed disreputable among the Brahmanical population of the Dakhin, though used often by the common people. This demon has a moon on his thigh, Siva has one on his forehead ; Siva's ornaments are snakes, the Ceyloneso demon has one round his neck. "According to the preached doctrine of Buddha, there is not a devil his equal in the world." (Y. N., 50.) Siva is called भूतेश Bhútesā, or prince of devils ; strong analogies these with the local superstitions of Ceylon, similar to which others prevail in the south of India, while there is not a trace of analogy in any of these points to the genuine doctrines of the Brahmans as contained in the Vedas.

From all these considerations, I think it as plain as such a subject can be made, that the worship of Siva is nothing more than a superstition of the aboriginal Indians, modified by the Brahmans, and adopted into their system for the sake of gaining an influence among the tribes who were previously addicted to its practice.

If it be asked, what local deity Siva represents, and what was his ancient name, I would state as a probable conjecture that केदार Kedār, was the original Hindu name of Siva. It is true the word Kedār has been adopted into the Sanskrit language, but its derivation from any Sanskrit root is quite fanciful ; and it may have been originally a Hindu word, signifying a mountain, and applied to the deity in question as the mountain god. The symbol of the Linga may have suggested itself, from the rounded peaks with which the Himālaya, the Sahyādri, and other Indian chains abound. Kedār is the name of a Himālayan Peak, and also of the highest peak on the Purandhar Hills in the vicinity of Puna, on which a temple to Siva, under the name of Kedār, is built. Similar temples are also built in other places on similar eminences. Supposing it objected that Párvatī, the wife of Siva, is said to be daughter of Hima, the genius of the Himālayan Mountains, with which Kedār is thus virtually identified, and that she cannot be both the daughter and the wife of the same divinity ; it may be answered, that this, so far from being an objection to the theory, is a confirmation of it ; for not only in the Matsya Purāna is Satarupā declared to have sprung from the body of Brahmā and to have become his wife, but Siva is represented in the Linga Purāna as being at first an Ardhanārīsvara, half male and half female, and is so sculptured in the great Elephanta Cave. When the separation took place, the separated male and female were Siva and

Párvatí, so that after that event, the former stands to the latter in the double relation of father and husband. Let it be observed, that I propose this merely as a probable theory, which, whether received or rejected, will not materially affect the main object of this paper founded on passages of the sacred writings of the Hindus, relative to the original character of Siva, and the nature of his worship, as proved to have had no place in the original Brahmanical system.
